Pay Me What You Owe Me

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Pay Me What You Owe Me

by Apocalyptic_Space_They

Summary

It was just supposed to be one job

Sure Nigel had a bad feeling about it from the beginning, and the client was particularly awful. In their line of work, they didn't expect to like their clients, as long as they paid, everyone got to walk away

Well except their targets, but that's just business.

Now Mason Verger was paying them extremely well to get rid of both his husband & boyfriend at the same time, with enough spectacle to hopefully draw suspicion off of him & get him some public sympathy.

The massive payday is enough to convince them to take the job despite their misgivings.

But a week later, hiding out in third rate hotel w/ two hostages & no payment in their account, Will & Nigel are having a very bad day, Hannibal & Adam are having a surprisingly ok day all things considered... and Mason Verger is about to find out exactly who he's been fucking with
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"Bitch better have my money
Y'all should know me well enough
Bitch better have my money
Please don't call me on my bluff
Pay me what you owe me"

-Rhianna

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Even Though You're Not Mine, You Got That Look In Your Eye

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"I dunno mate. I don't like this Mason Verger fuck. Everytime I talk to him my trigger finger gets fuckin itchy."

Will rolled his eyes at Nigel as they stepped into the extravagant elevator. Every surface was buffed and polished to an inhuman shine, so wastefully pretentious. Will considered his business partner.

Nigel Zon looked like a man who didn't give a single fuck about anything or anyone... and he didn't, anymore. Not caring about people didn't prevent him from being perceptive about their baser natures. For better and usually worse, Nigel was uncannily good at reading people. It was always best to trust his professional instincts, in this case the size of the pay out made the risk worth it, probably... hopefully. Will looked at Nigel through their shiny elevator reflections.

"You don't have to like him personally. His money spends the same regardless."

Nigel pulled a cigarette out of his half crushed pack, tamping it against his thumbnail and settling it between his lips without lighting it. He shrugged loosely, his naturally cavalier demeanor edged with wariness.

"Sure gorgeous, still, we should be careful. This guy... I don't think we should underestimate him, might end up pig food is all I'm sayin."

"Don't call me gorgeous Nigel or *I'll* feed you to the pigs."

Nigel scoffed, shaking his sandy blonde bangs out of his eyes.

"All right Billy Boy, don't get your panties in a twist. Just keep your eyes open, right?"

The elevator doors slid open before Will could tell Nigel not to call him fucking Billy Boy either. A couple drunken hook ups over the years didn't give him a free pass to call Will whatever dumb ass nickname he thought up. Though he clearly thought so.

Nigel loved being overly familiar with people. He was flirty by nature, outrageous by choice, and thought it was hilarious to make those that sat in haughty judgement uncomfortable. Usually that played out as instigating scuffles with khaki clad American Eagle Outfitter types at sports bars, intimidating the superiority complex right out of people on the sidewalk, and professionally causing the demise of the elitist super rich for money. It was as hobbies go, dangerous but lucrative.

Professionally Nigel's incendiary nature was useful. Personally, in the microcosm of Will & Nigel, a couple of criminally violent cynical introverts who never took breaks and lived with

absolutely no buffer between them...

Nigel had never met a personal boundary he didn't instinctually need to steamroll, and Will was brimming with them. Stitched together with secrets, acidic retorts, and rigid personal boundaries, Will maintained that his personal and professional lives were separate for a reason... and that the reason was none of Nigel's business.

Nigel knew unswervingly that everything was his business, and besides they were practically family. Those rules didn't apply to family. Will was therefore a very particular kind of entertaining challenge for him. Some men did sodoku or the crossword every day to keep their minds sharp. Some men solved murder mysteries, read literature, or were a little in love with their Rubik's Cubes. Nigel Zon had Will Graham and his nearly impenetrable veil of privacy to pick apart thread by thread. He loved the challenge of it and could never leave well enough alone anyway. Early on Nigel accidentally made getting under Will's skin his personal holy grail, and no one had ever called him a quitter.

Unfortunate then that Will hated people trying to slither into his skull, Nigel included. He couldn't stand the constant casual poking and prodding. It made him feel like a petri dish, made him angry enough to drive him to violence... if he didn't already live there. Since lying to the astute motherfucker was out of the question, Will settled for growling and snarling about it.

And if Will was being completely honest with himself, Nigel's perfect recall for other people's indiscretions, secrets, and lies, in case he ever needed to blackmail or seduce anyone, was incredibly useful. Nigel was nothing if not an equal opportunity privacy disruption.

But that didn't mean Will liked that skill focused on *him*.

They agreed to disagree.

On the job they worked together flawlessly, pack hunters slinking through the night in perfect unison. Outside of work was an entirely different story, they were to much alike in all the wrong ways. It created an undercurrent of conflict over what exactly the nature of their friendship was. A conflict that spiraled out into everything they did and said. Most of the time they were able to keep that conflict civil, friendly enough.

Billy boy though? That was a new low. Will thought it might actually be time to feed Nigel to Mason Verger's pigs. Then he'd get some peace and fucking quiet for once... maybe tomorrow. They should get paid first. Then he'd be hungry, so after dinner... next week, some other time. Will huffed at Nigel and by extension himself.

"Come on ***Nigel*** let's get this meeting over with."

The elevator opened into an extravagant hallway, full of Verger Family memorabilia, past and present. A museum of the Verger Family's accomplishments designed to make visitors feel small and powerless.

It took more then a family crest and a gratuitous display of wealth to unnerve either of them. Will Graham and Nigel Zon were not the sort of visitors billionaires usually had, even when

the billionaire in question was Mason Verger.

Nigel laughed silently at Will's theatrical scowling eye roll, perfectly aware he was being aggravating. He couldn't help himself. It was hilariously easy to get on good Will's nerves.

Mostly because Will was 85% nerves. The rest being guns, hunting knives, a blood thirsty snarky streak, piss, and vinegar. They both knew Nigel loved getting Will riled up.

Will was ridiculously hot when he was feeling bitey stabby and Nigel wasn't the kind of man to deny himself things he enjoyed. Anyway the game didn't bother Will nearly as much as he pretended it did. Having an excuse to be scathing at someone who wouldn't ever cry or run away always made Will's day a little more tolerable. So their quippy arguing was mostly friendly. Mostly.

When they got into The Verger Estate's finely appointed corporate home office, Mason spun around, gesturing them to the chairs in front of the desk with an unnecessarily dramatic flare implying they needed his direction to understand the fine art of sitting.

Annoying

He'd obviously been waiting for them, framed by his family's successes, so he could show them his powerful majesty... or whatever lies Mason Verger told himself about himself.

"Gentleman, please, as you know, I'm Mason Verger, head of The Verger Livestock Empire. You come to me highly recommended. I hope what I've heard is accurate. It would be unfortunate if you didn't live up to your reputation. Not unfortunate for my pigs though, they love the days they get a little extra treat in the feed trough."

The whole gleeful speech was mostly showboating bluster. In Nigel's experience people that were as rich as Mason were always a little pathetic. Never knowing love, friendship, or approval that didn't have a price tag attached to it, twisted people up, made them mean, self aggrandizing, and pathologically insecure.

Which was why Nigel always spent his money on whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted. No one was gonna see him turn into a bitter old man huddled inside the increasingly decrepit monument to his ego he called a personal library. Money just wasn't worth it.

Will would probably love that life, at least the library part. His partner was the best professional killer he'd ever had the pleasure of working with. But Will had a terminal allergy to fun, and a love for dusty academic tomes that Nigel would never quite understand.

Not that he'd judge anyone's lifestyle choices, especially when the someone in question would happily drop him in the bloody ocean for the crabs to pick clean. No Nigel was not a man to judge but Wil!'s adoration of prim and proper men with a bunch of academic letters attached to their names would always be a bit funny. Something about the image of murderous Will lurking in the forest on a hunt, reciting "Dante's Inferno" with some academic stuffed shirt and his whole pack of dogs just cracked Nigel up. It would be absurd if it was anyone else. But if there was one person in the world that was born to haunt a bog with nothing but his dogs and a knife, it was Will. The sort of romantic partner Will required

had blood on his hands, an extensive academic vocabulary in his mouth, a room full of leather bound books in his house, and a tolerance for both dogs and the out of doors in his heart.

Now if Nigel was ever gonna get serious with someone again he'd want them to be... surprising, perceptive, thoughtful, fun, soft, brave but sweet, loving even... and not afraid of who he really was. Someone who'd trust him, not despite who he was, but because of who he was. Something his ex-wife never did even when she thought the power was hot. There was fuck-all chance of that happening though, so fuck it.

Will cleared his throat to get Nigel's attention. Fucking ceo's and their fucking unecessary business meetings.

"Mr Verger, this is my business partner Nigel. I'm Will. That's all information you need about us. I'm sure you can understand that we value our privacy. I wonder then, why you needed to drag us all the way to your private office. What can we do for you here, that couldn't be discussed on the phone?"

Mason looked them over, taking his time, flipping a small pocket knife open and shut repeatedly to intimidate them. Unfortunately for him they weren't men who were easily intimidated. Will was trying to be civil with Mason, who was basically a trust fund kid with a god complex and a nasty little sadistic streak. Despite his excessive displays of ham fisted dominance, he was in way over his head.

Finally finishing his bit of theater, Mason tossed a stack of photos onto his ostentatious ebony desk. The pictures slid haphazardly across the dark wood, fanning out messily in front of them. He chuckled, pleased with himself.

"Ahh yes, what indeed? It seems that recently my husband Hannibal, and my boyfriend Adam, have become friendly. I'm sure you can imagine why that's not acceptable. I find myself craving fresh blood lately anyway. So I want you to kill them, obviously"

Well straight to the point then. Nigel and Will scooped up the pile of pictures and split the stack between them. There were two men. One of them, the boyfriend, Adam, was a little younger, he had dark wavy hair, piercing blue grey eyes, and a perpetually startled expression. In every picture of him there was an assortment of astronomical texts and satellite photos of deep space. It was an endearing effect, not that being endearing would keep either Will or Nigel from doing their jobs.

The other one, the husband, Hannibal, was a few years older. He had perfectly slicked back sandy blonde hair shot through with silver, and was impeccably well dressed in tailored three piece, single breasted suits. Everything about him said very old money.

Hannibal radiated an energy that implied he'd been born a fully formed adult into the mists of time with his snazzy plaid suits and aristocratic manners. It was an effect that would have to be intentionally cultured. In spite of the ambiguity, Will was willing to bet Hannibal had a title from wherever he was born, Europe probably. Old money and enough land to carry the knowledge in his bones... Hmm... a country dukedom maybe? ...or a count? Dr Lecter was classy in a way rich Americans never were, and new money never knew how to be. That

didn't happen in a vacuum, even if he was striving to appear unremarkably eccentric to the masses, Hannibal Lecter had a history and that history informed his present. European aristocrats, even country aristocrats, were their own subculture of exclusivity, that couldn't ever be entirely buried.

Will found himself drawn back to a picture of Hannibal in the kitchen, cooking ribs. The energy was so peaceful it was almost tangible in the room. The sort of peace Will could only ever capture on the hunt, a small taste of cosmic balance or some shit. He was intrigued despite himself, despite knowing the guy was gonna be piggy pot roast by next week, his interest was pointless... still it lingered, unwilling to be logiced away so easily.

Nigel, snort laughed around his unlit cigarette and flipped up the top picture on his stack to show Will. It was one of the pictures of Adam, beaming radiantly in front of a gigantic telescope,

"Will, mate look at this one. He kinda looks like you, if you ever shaved, or took the stick out of your ass. Is that what your face would look like if you smiled ya think? You should try it. He's kinda cute."

Will huffed, unimpressed.

"I don't seem to recall you having any complaints about my ass when you were the one in it Nigel... or what my mouth could do with or without a cute little smile for that matter."

Nigel shrugged noncommittally, just because Will was right didn't mean he'd give him the satisfaction of agreeing with him. Instead he leaned forward tapping one of the other pictures. This one of Hannibal holding court at a dinner party, playing a baby grande piano.

"Now this fussy cunt. He's your type Willy. That's a man that fuckin loves to sit around, sniffing books, talking about Nietzsche and Machiavelli, politely sippin bourbon older n me that still tastes like privilege n piss water."

Will sighed, an exaggerated, put out thing. This was part of their routine. It kept people underestimating them. Nothing to see here, just a thug and a twitchy little weirdo. It was still a genuinely exhausting routine.

"You'll have to excuse my partner Mr Verger, his childhood was sadly lacking. He might have the business manners of a half feral pig but he's very good at what he does. We both are. That I can guarantee. There's no one better."

Mason made a grandiose show of not minding, implying broadly that he'd planned everything they said for them. Such a tiresome asshole.

"Oh no, this is great. I love it. A floor show before the main event. I love a good floor show"

Will inclined his head slightly as if he cared, as if Mason said something interesting. This was a man heavily insulated in a bubble of people who were already afraid of him when he came to family power, dependents who couldn't fight back and employees that couldn't afford to

quit. Mason's lack of self awareness was stunning. Someone should recalibrate that for him... for the good of all humanity.

Will hated people who used their authority and money to torture helpless people. His skin prickled with the violence that surged through his bloodstream. He resisted the urge to rub the despicable sight of Mason Verger out of his eyes, internally adding another five million to their usual fee instead. Hazard pay for having to negotiate with this unsavory fuck.

Of course Nigel was right about the bad energy. Mason Verger got your hackles up and liked it that way. Will couldn't wait to be out of this meeting. He grumbled loudly, a disapproving sound from deep in his chest.

"You may like a show Mason but I'm a busy man. Let's get to the point. For the two of them, your fee's gonna be doubled. The kidnapping gone wrong scenario you alluded to previously is expensive to do flawlessly. We'll have to actually kidnap them for you. That's not something we would usually bother with. If you insist on the flourish, you'll have to pay for it. There's bound to be questions, complications. Part of that cost will cover the exorbitant action expenses. Twenty-five million per, half up front once we have them. The other half immediately upon complete contract fulfilment"

Mason chortled, a metaphorical snot demon lapping up curdled milk happily.

"Splendid, yes yes I think that will do just fine. You said 25 million, total."

Mason didn't correct himself, waiting, childishly excited for the challenge, leering.

Nigel sighed like Mason was that errant child. He slid his zippo out of his pocket, plucked the cigarette from his lips and leisurely packed if against his lighter. It was a good opportunity to give Mason some time to reconsider.

When Nigel lit his cigarette, he did it with relish. This was his favorite part of the so called floor show. The smoke settled in his lungs, soothing. Nicotine you beautiful evil bitch. He gestured loosely watching the smoke waft around his hands in big loopy curls.

"You know my ex wife hated it when I smoked, hated it when I drank, or broke the law in any way. She didn't like my profession, my friends, or most times, me. She had a lot of complaints, but she especially hated it when I killed people. The thing is Mason, I was a killer when we met. I never hid who I was. She knew me, always had. At first it's what she wanted, the associated power, you know. Then once we were married, once she was wearing designer dresses and diamonds that my job bought her.... "

Nigel paused and took another drag of his cigarette, ashing it casually in the direction of Mason's desk.

"Well, then It was a little late in the game to grow a conscience. If you go to bed with a killer, you wake up with a killer. She married a killer, what she got was a killer. And I am a killer through and through. So Mason, if you wanna play king of the mountain, go find some of your little pork belly mates to play with. We're not the ones to trifle with. I know you heard my partner. 25 million *each*, take it or leave it. You wanted the best so you're paying for our

services accordingly. If you want some silly little bitch with a gun instead. We'd be more then happy to refer you to someone else, someone who's not the best."

Nigel took one last, long drag of his cigarette and crushed it out on Mason's very expensive desk, intentionally slowly, never breaking eye contact and devil may care smirk in full effect. So many rich bullies folded with the slightest push back, likewise Mason crumpled like wet paper as soon as he got the impression that he wasn't the most crazy dangerous bastard in the room. Nigel had no problem being that guy, none at all.

As expected, Mason stalled out, mean little men in expensive suits, rarely had the sort of life experience needed to know how to mange Nigel. When the chips were down they only knew how to buy their way out of things. An instinct he was happy to stir up in a client. Give me my money and your little toxic billionaire universe can go back to coddling you Mason Verger.

Furious, Mason leapt up to pace near the picture windows, trying to maintain his sense of control in a situation he had very little control of.

"Fair enough, I had to try. That's just good business. 25 million each then, half once you have them, the other half when it's done"

There, the business at hand, finally.

The second they came to an official agreement, Will, having reached his capacity for strangers and their bullshit, nodded a clipped *"fine",* collected all the information and pictures Mason provided them, and got out of there without another word.

That suited Nigel just fine. He'd had enough of massaging that particular prick for one day anyway.

They were almost back to their automobile before either of them said anything. Nigel lit another cigarette with obvious good humor, waving at Will, encouraging him to spill it. Will Graham always had opinions, thoughts, and ideas about the job. He would stew until he got them out. Nigel learned over the years to ask before he got snippy, or worse, stabby. Easy in the bright afternoon sun, Nigel spun to face Will, hands held wide in question.

"Well?"

"Well"

Nigel slid into the passenger seat of the SUV, peering at Will's deeply irritated scowl, amused.

"You wanna kill him, don't you?"

"I want him to pay us posthaste, for the agreed upon business"

Nigel was positively gleeful now.

"Then you wanna kill him"

"... Then I want to kill him... maybe, he's awful, even by billionaire standards and as a group they're already one bad decision away from being eaten by the proletariat. How the fuck did he convince two separate people to sleep with him? I considered just dropping him in his pig pit honestly. Skip the payday and just watch his own pigs eat his face. It's a beautiful image, He deeply, cosmically deserves to die by pig ingestion. He's an offense to.... my nerves... and humanity."

Nigel kicked back in his seat, a modern war lord, luxuriating in the thrill of the battle drums thumping in his ears. He smiled fondly at Will's vicious imaginings.

"All right, now that's my gorgeous Billy Boy, always ready to throw down and feed an unlikable cunt to his own pigs."

Will grumbled, as he started the SUV up.

"We'll worry about that after we get paid"

"After we get paid then. That means, first we need to snatch ourselves a set of posh queens. If I knew I could so easily get paid for a spot of gun violence in the US, I woulda come over sooner. Law & Order had me thinking I'd be getting frisked as soon as anyone looked at me. Just think, I coulda been here years ago, coulda skipped that whole bullet in the face part of my divorce. This corrupt country though, land of the lawless, home of the entrepreneurial, all decadence and denial. I fuckin love that shit. So many shadows for men like us to play in"

--

1 Weeks Later

Bluebird Motel

South Virginia

Nigel threw his burner phone on the bed.

"Gawdamn it, I fuckin hate Mason fuckin Verger."

Hannibal, bound and blindfolded, propped up on the bed, clucked in sympathetic agreement. Nigel snapped at the unasked for commentary.

"Shut the fuck up *doctor* Lecter-, ... Will, I thought we had him sedated?"

Will looked between Nigel, bristling with snide frustration and Hannibal, relatively compliant considering his current predicament. He managed to radiate calm and ease from his spot beside Adam who was curled up in a little ball of misery in a nest of cheap motel pillows, doing his best to ignore anyone not Hannibal.

When they'd picked them both up, Hannibal immediately started wheeling and dealing to give Adam some ease. You'd think he'd know he was in no position for negotiation, you'd be

wrong though. Hannibal didn't really seem worried about that. He didn't really seem worried about anything at all. It was strange, particularly considering he knew exactly why they'd been kidnapped. Who looked to their own oncoming death as such an unremarkable event? Curiouser and Curiouser, Will found every new thing he learned about Hannibal fascinating.

They ultimately agreed, Hannibal would stay bound and blindfolded in exchange for Adam not being restrained at all. They didn't agree at first of course. But when Hannibal explained why he was asking, well, Will had some experience with being an autistic kid with no advocates in the system and the trauma that caused. That changed things. As long as they both behaved, the status quo was allowed to persist. Barely.

Since Mason Verger wasn't available to cuss out directly, Nigel was still cussing his phone out colorfully, in several different languages.

Mason was putting off paying them. He'd been manufacturing one excuse after another for two days. This stalemate couldn't go on much longer. Eventually one of their targets would try to run, then shit would get really messy, really quick... and then there were the professional repercussions of Mason thinking he could dupe them into taking such a big job for free. That was not a precedent they could allow to continue. If they weren't paid what they were owed soon, Mason Verger was gonna have a whole new set of problems much bigger then being bored with his bedmates.

The whole thing was more infuriating every day. Will sighed, rubbing his face, exhausted. Oh, Nigel asked a question.

"We're out of sedatives, so unless you just want to get him real high..."

Nigel threw himself back on the bed, sprawling in the direction of their captives.

"Fuck yeah let's do it"

Will felt so disconnected from reality, it was hard to focus. He scrunched his face up in thought.

"You want to get him high?"

"I want to get all of us high Will. It's been one hell of a week. I bet the kid talks about the stars when he's high, don't you babe?"

Adam didn't move, answering from the well of his crossed arms.

"I'm not a kid, I'm 31, only four years younger then Mr Graham. You're not that much older then me either, younger then Hannibal. I'm autistic not a child. I went to college, I've been high before, and not that you actually care, but yes. The nature of stars is so incredibly unlikely, they're beautiful, but not just beautiful. We know so little about them really. There's so much supposition, and they're just, cosmically gorgeous, it's... romantic. So yes I probably talk about the stars when I'm high."

Stretching out in a casual sprawl, finger tips tucked lightly underneath Adam's foot, Nigel smiled warm and inviting around his cigarette. Adam didn't startle or move away, instead peeking over the horizon of his arms to return a crooked tentative smile. That interaction was surprising but not entirely unprecedented. Nigel could be charming in his own brash poetic way when he felt like it.

Right now he obviously felt like it, squeezing Adam's foot in silent endeared acknowledgement as he continued.

"Cosmically Gorgeous. That's perfect babe. See Will? We all need a break. I for one would love to hear about some beautiful fucking mysterious stars, and I'll bet you a hundred bucks and my back up pistol that plaid slacks here has strong opinions about Greek Philosophers or whatever the fuck it is you're always on about"

Hannibal stirred though he made no attempt to actually move from where Will put him earlier.

"Greek Philosophers were *some* of the first major influences into modern western thought, that's true. They weren't the first or in my opinion the most conceptually unique, however they posed some questions that can at least be an entertaining thought experiment... I don't know if I get a vote, but I wouldn't mind getting high. A light intoxication might help pass the time, and give my knees some relief"

Nigel laughed uproariously at that.

"Gawdamn, I like him. Entertaining thought experiment. The man has style, I gotta give him that. You're out voted Will, might as well give it up"

Will was so out of sorts, he felt like screaming. Nothing had gone to plan and no one was giving him time to think. It was to crowded and loud in here to have a single thought. He just needed a minute to think... Actually maybe whiskey and weed would be exactly what the situation called for, smooth out his jagged edges. If he was really lucky the rest of them would zone out for awhile, give him some much needed quiet time.

Hannibal was still kneeling on the bed, blindfolded, hands zip tied behind his back. They'd set him up there nominally for the phone call, in case Mason wanted to talk to him or whatever... really it was just because Will thought he looked much to pretty like that to bother resituating him. Sue him, he was a bad bad man. He was fine with that.

Will was pretty sure Hannibal knew he was looking too, even with the blindfold. Something about the small smirk he wore every time they spoke. It was like Hannibal could smell Will's interest in him, could taste his lingering looks. Hannibal couldn't see him at all and yet Will felt excruciatingly seen, more accurately perceived then anyone even Nigel, had ever made him feel. The strangest part was that it wasn't threatening. It was exhilarating.

Like the quiet moment right before the violence starts.

So fuck it, everyone was getting high.

Twenty minutes later they were passing around a bong. It went fine until it was Hannibal's turn, his hands were still tied behind his back. Will didn't think it would be a good idea to have Hannibal free roaming for some reason. His predator sense tingled in a way that made him extra cautious with Doctor Lecter.

Hannibal either sensing the hesitation, or just having deduced it would be a problem when it was his turn, cocked his head in the general direction of Will's voice.

"You could untie me, or retie my hands in front of me. I could more or less manage on my own even with my hands tied."

Will scoffed.

"No, I'm not untying you. Do I look stupid to you? Please. So you're telling me you're just gonna get high with us?"

Hannibal quirked a genuine effervescent smile at him.

"My dear William, you're focusing to hard on the suit. I was a young man in Europe in the 90's. I promise no one's really lived until they've' gone on a three day Hash, ecstacy, and mushroom fuelled journey through Amsterdam's most prestigious art museums. The beauty is such that the soul desires true ascension so that it may live eternally housed in such glorious perfection. So yes. I think I can handle getting high with you. It doesn't appear I have anything better to do anyway, do I?"

Despite this show of agreeability Will didn't quite trust it. Hannibal was way to agreeable given the situation, something was up and until he had a handle on what it was, it would be best to not let down his guard to much. Wil shook his head loosely.

"Well as delightful a story as that is, I think I'll do it for you. I'm not trying to get hit over the head with my partner's silly glass bong while you make your escape"

Hannibal shrugged, unconcerned.

"As you wish, I'm at your tender mercies then William"

Something feral in Will growled at that, ferocity straining to get out and wreak havoc around him, to find all of Hannibal's most tender places. He did his best to breathe through it and help Hannibal with the oversized water pipe.

Five minutes later, it still wasn't working. No matter how many times Will tried to hold the bong up for Hannibal, the angle just wouldn't work out comfortably. Maybe Will was just a little to pleasantly high to sort it out. Maybe Hannibal was making it difficult on purpose. Regardless now that he was in Hannibal's orbit, it seemed less urgent to *win* this situation.

After yet another failed attempt at getting actual smoke into Hannibal, that had Will hissing in frustration, he decided to take a second. Will hovered, crouched over Hannibal musing, trying to figure out what about the geometry of this situation was causing the problem. Hannibal who was still blithely blindfolded and tied up, perched on his knees, looked blindly

up at Will like he was staring into his very soul. Will imagined lightning crackling between them.

The lilt of Hannibal's accent was heavy with emotion, growl purring up at Will.

"Perhaps you should slide in behind me William, you'll have more control of the pipe's angle with a reach around then this backwards missionary prayer configuration"

Will blinked down at Hannibal and his blatant innuendo. He was so sexy on his knees, blindfold firmly in place. That was a deliciously terrible idea, he knew it was a terrible idea. Fuck it. Apparently this week was the week of delicious terrible ideas. Will laughed, hollow, sharp, and wanting.

"Fuck it, ok"

Hannibal smirked a little more, licked his teeth, cheerfully amused.

Will settled in a kneel behind Hannibal, thighs flanking his plaid clad hips, his well manicured hands in their binding, pressed in an overly familiar way against the hollow of Will's hip bone. This was a terrible idea. The heat from Hannibal's body made a home in Will's spine as he leaned forward, his nose almost buried in the nape Hannibal's neck. He smelled like smoke, pepper, leather, and musky sweat. Wapping his arms around Hannibal, bong in hand and trying not to think about how deeply tempted he was, Will did his best to sound unaffected.

"You ready Hannibal?"

Listening to something further away, Hannibal cocked his head, craning his neck a bit to face Will as much as possible. As if he wasn't functionally blind in the blindfold. He leaned further back into Will, nearly nuzzling his neck, quietly rumbling into the squareness of his jaw.

"I'm ready, are you? Your boyfriend appears to be quite taken with my husband's boyfriend."

Will knew he was scowling, he couldn't help it.

"Nigel's not now and has never been my boyfriend"

Will could feel the curve of Hannibal's smile against his jaw.

"Hmm oh really? Yet you seem to have an intimate knowledge of each other..."

"If you mean we've fucked, sure. Nigel has a skill set, I've availed myself to it's pleasures on occasion. We're not in a relationship though. We're not intimate like that. I don't do emotionally intimate."

Hannibal hummed in thought.

"Oh really?"

"Its the year of our Lord 2023 Hannibal, you spent your adolescence tripping your ass off in European Hostels and I spent it discovering I'm a much more pleasant person when I'm getting laid, but I have yet to meet anyone that I wouldn't end up murdering before coffee, or who conversely would enjoy being in a relationship with me... so yeah, oh really"

Hannibal's humming acknowledgment spread like liquid heat along the long line of Will's throat.

"And why would that be Will Graham?"

Something sharp and dangerous, blood thirsty spiked through Will's nervous system. Enough of the damn games.

"Because I'm fucking mean Doctor Lecter, I'm mean and I like it."

On a rash impulse, knowing as he did it that he shouldn't, Will darted in and bit Hannibal's jawline, hard enough for it to leave a mark, hard enough for it to hurt, hard enough for it to bleed if Hannibal struggled at all.

He didn't.

Will growled around his mouthful of Hannibal's face, not inclined to let go now that he had his teeth in him. Practiced enough to still be able to speak clearly enough.

"I'm not in the mood for anymore attempted mind fuckery Doctor Lecter, so if you don't fucking mind. Smoke this pot or you'll be a lot less pretty tomorrow."

Will could feel the brush of Hannibal's stubble under his tongue as Hannibal finally did as he was told, let Will hold the bong up to his mouth properly. Fucking finally.

Will, grinding his teeth just enough to make Hannibal tense occasionally, watched the getting stoned process in a slightly detached manner, the fire flicking, pearly grey smoke filling it up, the rush of air as he cleared it twice. Hypnotic.

When Hannibal was finally done and Will had no choice but to let him slip from between his teeth, there was an angry red bite mark on the swell of Hannibal's jaw, shiny with Will's saliva.

Hah Oops

Will moved to get up, slapping the bite mark harder then he should first. Hannibal flinched lightly at the sting, then giggled at Will, melting easily back into him, keeping him from escaping the closeness just yet. Will was painfully aware of how hot this was, the way he wanted to tear Hannibal apart, to rip open that unflappable exterior, make him beg and scream, get him filthy with blood and cum.

Hannibal, lolling against him, awfully at ease for a man still bound and blindfolded, sighed with a pointed mischievous drama.

"Such a petty vicious little thing you are William. I'm gonna have a mark there tomorrow aren't I?... I should've liked to have met you in Italy I think, what beautiful music we would've made together. The symphonies we would've composed in bile and blood. The heavens themselves would weep."

Will blinked at the warm feeling in his chest that gave him. Jesus, they were going to kill these men when they got paid and he was sitting here thinking about them fucking, kissing him... telling Hannibal all his most sacred secrets... running away with him. Will had to get a handle on himself... maybe literally, right this second.

He stood up abruptly without responding, shoving Hannibal off of him... though he made sure he landed on his side. His knees must be hurting by now. Hannibal smirked blindly in knowing amusement.

Fuck.

"Nigel I'm showering, don't forget the job man"

"Sure mate, I'm fucking good"

Behind him he could hear Adam enthusing happily.

"No no I swear it's literally the coolest thing in the known universe. The Boomerang Nebula Nigel, it's the coldest object recorded by human technology so far"

Nigel, giggled indulgent and relaxed.

"Oh I see so I can't be the coolest thing in the universe, because the boomerang Nebula is?"

"Yes, exactly"

Gawd dammit tomorrow they were going to have to make something happen because this, this was really really bad. Mason fucking Verger needed to pay them what he owed them. Tomorrow if he was still procrastinating, well there would be repercussions. There had to be repercussions.

Will stumbled into the bathroom, locked the door, and made sure the shower was scalding before he stepped into it. The stinging heat washed all his stress away for a minute at least. He couldn't stop thinking about the taste of Hannibal's face in his mouth, how strong he felt pressed against Will, how at ease he was, sensual. The pretty ring of pinkish red teeth marks along the curve of his jaw.

It made his body hum possessive and hungry. This wasn't cuddles and understanding time, it was get it together god dammit Will Graham time. He couldn't think this stressed and horny, he had to take care of it. A wank was just practical, he told himself, unbelieving.

One hand rough around his cock. The other shoved in his mouth, biting the base of his thumb, hard. A deep pain that lanced through him and settled electric in his gut. The bite was in the fleshy pad of his palm where it wouldn't easily leave a mark, he could make it hurt enough, wishing it was Hannibal's teeth sharp, buried in his skin instead. Will was close

brutally fast, his need careening through him, remembering the rumble of Hannibal's happy hum, the spicy sweet smell of him, the heat of his body, the salty masculine taste of him, the stoic flinch at the cut of Will's teeth digging into him, claiming him.

"MINE"

He came painfully hard at the thought of possessing Hannibal, decorating his perfect aristocratic pouty mouth obscenely with his teeth and his cock, covering his purring pretty face in cum. He whined as pleasure tore through him. The waves of his orgasm dragging a choking gagging sob out of him. Faint, shuddering through the aftershocks and sagging against the shower wall catching his ragged breath, Will let the pinprick hot water wash over him for a few minutes while he regained his composure.

Fucking Hell. Now at least he'd be able to think.

Hopefully

Because they had to come up with a whole new Gawdamn plan.

-

When Will was recovered enough to get dressed and leave the bathroom without giving himself away. Hannibal, who was still bound but no longer blindfolded, was propped up on a pillow with a Tv remote. Nigel and Adam were no where to be found. What the fuck?

"Where in the fuck are Nigel and Adam?"

Hannibal smiled at him, a posh fluff ball of a cat content in the sunshine. He was practically purring again.

"You look much more relaxed... Did you have a nice shower? It sounded like it was *verrry* nice..."

Oh fuck, was he being that loud? That was embarrassing. So so embarrassing. Focus Will, you can punish yourself later.

"It was Fan-fucking-tastic, Where are Nigel and Adam, Hannibal?"

"They should be back soon I think. They finished their joint, Adam got the munchies, he wanted something fried. So they set me up like this and are going on a junk food run. Adam is safe with your not boyfriend right? They seemed ok but this situation does lend itself to worry. Nigel said the wanker, that's you I believe, would live and that he'd bring back some fries or something so you can unfucking clench. That part's verbatim, unfucking clench wanker. Personally, I wouldn't mind getting my teeth into a little meat, so I asked for a burger"

Will listened in distant dawning horror. When this was done, he was so going on vacation somewhere nice without any work related drama, somewhere in Europe maybe. Somewhere completely free of fucking Mason Verger shaped complications. He stared blankly at Hannibal, sitting heavily on the bed beside him.

"Well, fuck me"

"Mmmh Ok, but I'm not a cheap date. Good food and good fun only"

Will knew he should deflect the joke, but looking at Hannibal propped up on the pillows, blindfold dangling crooked around his neck, hands pinned behind his back still, he just couldn't do it. He stared pointedly at the television as he grumbled, embarrassed.

"Yeah... Ok"

Will braved a peek at Hannibal, his tight lipped smile had grown feral. Hungry.

Fuck. How was he so hot?

Will was so fucked he could almost feel it.

Will Graham cosmically starving, cosmically furious, cosmically cursed, cosmically fucking fucked.

The worst part was that he was looking forward to it.

The still before the storm

The quiet right before the time for violence

The best part was that it was almost time to play

The breath before the rabbit bolts

The split second before the pack descends

He loved the chase

If Mason Verger wasn't gonna pay them what he owed them, Will would carve it out of him. Make Hannibal a fine feast of roast beast... and wouldn't that be a nice first date?

Yeah Will Graham was terminally fucked and that was really just fine

Chapter End Notes

Chapter Title Song:

Jackson Wang, Cruel

Do I Wanna Know The Ending?

Chapter Notes

This chapter was such a delight, Nigel & Adam have a much different energy then our favorite extremely earnest all the time murder husbands.

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Dialog with asterisks & italics, starting with "*Nigel, wait*" are in Romanian.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Adam wished he knew what the social protocol was for being kidnapped. Were there rules he didn't know? He should probably assume there were, even if it seemed absurd for there to be unspoken social rules for a kidnapping. There was almost always at least a couple social rules no one bothered to tell him.

"Can I ask you a question Nigel? ... Well two?... Actually now that I think about it I have three questions... maybe more"

Nigel looked up from where he was lounging on the bed, using a largish astrophysics book as a makeshift weed tray to roll a joint.

"Yeah? Ask away babe"

"Ok, actually now I think I have even more questions."

Nigel laughed, he wasn't laughing at Adam though. No Nigel was just a little high and happy to be in a better mood. He could tell, it was broadcast in the twinkling merriment in his eyes and the warm crooked smile he wore. Nigel was pleasantly easy to read and hadn't once lied about his mood. In fact, since they got here, Adam hadn't needed to second guess how Nigel was feeling at all. He always said what he meant and never tried to hide his feelings, wore them plainly on his face. It was such a relief to never feel like they were playing a super secret because- you- should- just- know motivation guessing game.

Which was good, because he really needed to know if there was a kidnaping protocol. For instance, was he allowed to appreciate his kidnapper's demeanor? Or was that inappropriate? Hannibal and his whole situation with Mr Graham not withstanding... He couldn't decide if there was some precedent that he should be aware of.

They sat in companionable silence for a bit while Nigel finished rolling their joint and Adam decided which question was most important... how to ask them at all. He didn't feel rushed or babied which was nice, unfamiliar but pleasant.

Nigel licked the joint closed, his deft hands attended to the simple task with a quiet surety that made Adam yearn for something not quite clear to him. Nigel shook his bangs out of his eyes, smiling lightly as he leaned back, relaxing into the space. His voice was unexpectedly soothing as he lit, hit, and passed the joint.

"Babe, you can ask as many questions as you want. What is it you americans say? It's a free fucking country? That's probably an insult to fucking freedom but you can ask me any question you want"

Adam took the joint, schooling his face to his most serious, flat, autistic resting bitch face blank expression, the one the neurotypicals always thought was angry. He didn't know if he was allowed to joke this way either, but it seemed relatively safe. Waving with extra camp in the direction of Hannibal & Will as he took his hit. He pulled an overly confused contemplative face.

"Ok... This wasn't what I was gonna ask but... do you think they're gonna be sexy arguing over that bong all night?"

Nigel fell back into Adam's pillow nest laughing as quietly as possible, which wasn't that quiet, Will paused in the great clash of the murderous homosexual titans to scowl at Nigel briefly before he went back to... whatever weird mating ritual they were participating in. Adam felt inordinately proud of making Nigel laugh. The surprising bonus of a casual proximity that felt a little electric left Adam feeling shy in a way he rarely did.

Nigel didn't bother getting up, he stayed half laying next to Adam, propped up on one elbow halfway into the pillow fort, snickering into Adam's personal space, stoned and cheerful.

"Will? Our good Will-, fucking-? Yeah... Will... my Man Will... I love that miserable son of a bitch a lot. He's family. If you tell him I said that I'll deny it. Our friendship is built on cooperative bullshit and denial. But my boy is emotionally... He's brilliant, dead brilliant... but emotionally? I-, fuck he's just... just Will, and he doesn't know how to not make himself miserable, so yeah if your whatever the fuck in law... Plaid slacks there, is willing to keep playing sensual bong-centric power games, Will won't be able to let it go, can't ever let go of something he wants no matter how much he thinks he's doing exactly that... he's stubborn... and... selectively oblivious."

Clicking his tongue, Nigel shot Adam a single lazy finger gun, clearly a bit proud of himself for thinking of a good way to describe his business partner to an outsider. No wonder Hannibal took such an interest in Will Graham. There was an emotional balance between them. Adam wasn't sure whether it was Nigel's joke, Hannibal and Will's theatrical bong water wrestling debut, or the the surreality of this whole situation that had a sharp burst of giggles bubbling in Adam's chest. He leaned into Nigel just a bit, to whisper.

"You know Hannibal is making it difficult on purpose right?"

Laugh nodding gleefully, Nigel lit a cigarette, took a drag and then immediately had a little stoned mini drama with himself when he realized it was also his turn to take a hit, which technically he could still do having two hands... maybe he forgot about his other hand, maybe he didn't want to sit up just yet. Adam didn't really know, either way he was enjoying the

closeness, so he decided to be merciful, holding the joint up between his fingers so Nigel could hit it without having to navigate sitting up to hold it himself.

Nigel beamed at him, leaned in and gently but firmly took Adam's wrist to steady the lack of space between them.

"Oh, I...."

Adam's voice died in his throat, he was to painfully aware of everywhere they were touching. Nigel's lips brushing his finger tips, the rough end of day stubble making his skin tingle. Then there was the way Nigel's long fingers wrapped around his wrist, ring finger and pinky only due to the cigarette, thumb pressed purposefully into his pulse point. The thought of Nigel noticing his heart thundering in his chest made a strange pleasant nervous twist in his gut. This was to much, he was gonna forget how to talk at this rate.

A nebula is a collection of dust and gasses in space, visible in the night sky.

When Nigel let go, he shook his bangs out of his eyes again, smiling so fondly it made Adam feel exponentially more high.

"Thanks gorgeous"

Adam's stomach did the funny little flip again, more fizzy, less painful this time. He wasn't sure anyone had ever called him gorgeous before, cute sure. He got called cute or sweet, smart or handsome. But gorgeous? ... His brain went to loud crackling white noise.

There are five known named types of nebulous objects in space

Nigel tapped him on the knee to bring his attention back in to focus.

"Far be if for me to harsh a man's mellow but that was only one question and now you've set unrealistically high question expectations. I need more now, if you don't ask me your questions, I'll be forced to ask you questions. This is on you Babe. You've created a monster."

Adam blushed a bit, hoping Nigel didn't notice. Hopefully blushing wasn't against the rules? He needed to calm down before he messed it up... This was so nice. He really didn't want to mess it up. Think calm thoughts.

A planetary nebulae is made up of cosmic gas and dust shed from the outer layers of a dead or dying star. Stellar decomposition

"Oh, right? I'm sorry Nigel. I always have a lot of questions but people don't usually like it when I ask qualifying questions. It seems like I shouldn't aggravate you in this situation. So maybe I shouldn't ask after all"

Nigel jokingly clutched his chest, mock scandalized.

"Do I fucking look like regular fucking people to you Adam? Is this the real housewives of fucking Maryland or Virginia or some shit? Is Hannah Montana about to walk through that door and tell me I'm a dirty Romanian slut?"

Adam covered his face, laughing to sharply at that.

"Nooooo, that's not how any of those shows work...."

"Well damn baby, how the fuck would I know that? I'm not regular fuckin people now am I? So ask your questions. If I say something, I mean it"

The thing was, as near as Adam could tell, he really did mean it when he said a thing. It was amazing, irrationally it made Adam want to kiss him. He wondered what Nigel's face looked like when he wanted you... When he was in love with you... He tried not to blush over that thought.

A Reflection Nebulae is a cloud of cosmic dust that reflects the light and color of nearby stars visibly, with insufficient energy to ionize the dust to a radiant state. Interstellar Symmetry

Right, he was supposed to be asking questions or something...

"Mmm ok, I'll endeavor to not insult you by calling you normal anymore"

Nigel nodded through his perpetual cloud of smoke.

"Good. See that you don't. What did I ever do to you to earn these insults?"

"Haa! ohhh, I don't know, kidnap me?"

Adam froze, oh his mouth got him in trouble at the worst times. That was probably to honest. Shit.

Nigel stopped what he was doing, which was always smoking. He looked sideways at Adam, more amused then angry.

"I'll be goddamned, so much judgement coming from such a small and unassuming person. What's a little nonconsensual kidnapping between friends Beautiful? You're telling me you've never kidnapped a boy?"

"What? Nooo"

"Not one single boy?"

"Noooooooo"

"Not even if he was really pretty?"

"What? Oh-, I-, uh no of course not"

"Not even if he was really pretty and made you laugh?"

Adam tried desperately not to blush, squeak, or flail around to much. His whole face screwed up with the effort.

"No, I couldn't-, that's not... I'm not supposed to"

"Not supposed to? Oh but Gorgeous only doing what we're supposed to do is so fucking boring. We can't live our lives based on other people's supposed to. They don't pay our bills or keep our hearts beating, why the hell should they be the center of our universe?"

As if to illustrate his point, Nigel did a little jazz hands gesture with his free hand. When Adam didn't respond, Nigel took him by the wrist again and flapped his hand gently up and down, with a little encouraging chin nod. Oh well that was all right. That was nice. Adam couldn't imagine that Nigel actually wanted him to be happy stimming did he? Did he know about that? He must, he wouldn't let it go until Adam did the little hand flippy stim he'd been craving. Oh that was very good. When he was brave enough to look at Nigel again, he was effervescent happy with him.

"Exactly gorgeous, fuck all those boring, up their own asses cunts. Fuck what they say you're supposed to do. All you're supposed to do is be you. That's it."

Adam knew he probably shouldn't agree with Nigel. People had been telling him his whole life that there were right and wrong ways to do things, that he did basically everything wrong. That he should be a particular way and that it was very bad that he wasn't. They couldn't all be wrong could they? Maybe it wasn't as simple as should or shouldn't like it was very often not as simple as right and wrong, good and evil, appropriate and inappropriate. After all Hannibal was good to him but also well- no no not that, not right now. Everything felt much to fuzzy and sideways in his brain to think about **that**.

There's no actual center of the universe. Everything expands from itself everywhere at once.

"Well the- I think you meant the center of the solar system, a sun is a star and it's the center of it's solar system more or less, if it has objects in it's gravitational field. Galaxies have-, there is cyclical movement in galaxies, of course the bigger the object in space the more our observation of movement is theoretical, mathematical. That's not important.... well it's very important, but not relevant to your point which I did understand. I'm sorry. I get caught up in details, lost in the revelation of our cosmos... I'm so sorry you find me boring though. I'll endeavor to live closer to your standards so I'm less boring to you, oh wait. Then I'd still be living someone else's life. Hmm, I don't know you might be stuck with my boring, now *please* stop being funny for a minute. I'll never get my questions out if you keep being so cute"

Adam almost clamped his hand over his mouth. Did he just call Nigel cute? Oh god. Thankfully, Nigel only grinned at him.

"Cute huh? I don't think you're boring at all, or that I'm all that funny. You're just high, Pretty"

Pretty? Adam's stomach burbled happily. The rest of him felt much to overwhelmed to think.

A dark nebulae is a large dense cloud of cosmic dust that blocks the radiant light from the stars behind it, making it visible, sometimes even to the naked eye, if you know where to look. Cosmic veils

"So are you! You're high! Oh you're teasing me aren't you? Ok yes fine. I'm ignoring you then... poorly but it's what I'm doing, just ignoring you. MY NEXT QUESTION... Ok no, but really, is there an unspoken protocol for being kidnapped I'm unaware of? Follow up question, why did you guys let me bring my books? I'm not that naive, I-, we know why we're here... why were you-, why're you being so kind to me?"

Nigel went still, immediately deadly serious. It was unexpected. He didn't know what he expected exactly, maybe for Nigel to pretend they weren't here as contract killers. That's what most people would do surely, be embarrassed by the reality of the situation... But not Nigel. He just seemed... more reserved then his usual, pensive or something.

"Oh, well that, see the thing is, you grew up in the system right? So did our Billy boy, and where I grew up, *organized crime*, mobs, gangs, whatever you want to call that part of survival living. The kind that's rooted in places where people are kept desperate and hopeless on purpose, where they don't have good choices. I was a kid once and that's what I was born into, bad choices. I could use my fists, my ass, or guns to stay alive. I did what I had to do, that's all. But babe, the point is we both know what it's like to be stuck in a system that doesn't give a fuck about some fuckin kid who's a little bit "funny". I might be a fuckin killer and an all around bad damn man. But I'm not incapable of... shit, I may be a mobster and a monster, but I'm not fuckin evil."

"Oh, I... I see... I'm sure my experiences are biased,, but I don't really think you're a monster. I've seen men without any kind of human heart, irredeemable monsters with very human hearts, and people who embody whatever the hell evil is... Mason. You don't seem like any of those types of people to me, I guess... so you chose guns?"

Nigel sighed, suddenly tense, wheezing a long drawn out tired sigh, deflating slightly, like he knew this was about to go bad for him. It was an expression Adam himself had worn in a conversation more times then he could count.

"Look babe, you take this however the fuck you need to. But you don't come to be who I am today out of the goddamn blue. You work up to this. I spent plenty of time on my fuckin knees when I was younger, less experienced, less mean... Nobody should be ashamed of what they do to live, and I'm sure as hell not. I won't apologize for who I am, who I was"

Oh no. Adam wasn't sure what the right thing to say was, only that he had to say something.

"No Nigel, I wouldn't expect you to apologize for who you are. Please don't, I like who you are. Modern capitalist culture is transactional anyway, everybody is selling a piece of themselves or buying a piece of someone else.... for two and a half years, I've been the house boy of the most vile man I've ever known to pay for grad school. I have no room or desire to judge"

Nigel relaxed again, falling like gravity back into the well of their ease.

"Capitalist society is transactional. Capitalist society is *transactional.* God damn Beautiful. Beautiful. There's no protocol, you're doing fine, ya got strong fuckin hostage instincts. I've had much worse. But considering you *are* my hostage, I'm not sure I can trust your measure

of how monstrous I am. If I'm not a monster what the fuck am I? You're kind of tough aren't you? Adam Raki you're not at all what I expected, much more interesting then advertised."

"Me? No, I'm not tough, I just have a good... support network, I guess. What I think, is that you're someone who can do what needs to be done. A trait I admire. There are so many things I need to do and can't. Ok so you're kinda murdery, still... I just... Anyway, wow I-, thank you, I appreciate you for being so open and thoughtful. **Sigh** I'm so bad at taking compliments... It was a compliment right? What if it wasn't one? Oh god. Soooo yeah, I think I'm gonna move along to my next question. Why do you keep calling me babe, gorgeous, pretty?"

Nigel smirked at him easily

"You sayin you don't like it?"

Adam buried his face in his hands again, desperately trying not to blush fluorescent pink.

"I-, nooo I'm not saying that."

Nigel winked at him, which just made Adam blush more. He completely hid his face in his hands, eyes squeezed shut, palms pressing his cheeks. Trying desperately to ground himself. After what seemed like an eternity, Adam tried to look at Nigel again but still felt shy, so settled on peeking through his fingers like he hadn't since he was a tween. *Ahhhhh*. My god, the world was right. He really was hopeless. He had to get it together. Nigel was still smirking at him, pleased, wreathed in smoke. He was gorgeous. To gorgeous to be real.

"You think you're so cool, don't you?"

Nigel leaned in close, to whisper in his ear, just like Adam had under different circumstances. His voice was a smoke raspy growl punctuated with happy laughing divots.

"Think I'm cool? Baby I know I'm cool, the coolest"

"You can't possibly be the coolest"

"Oh really? Why not?"

There was another plateau of cursing from across the motel room as Adam explained that there was actually an existing known coolest thing in the galaxy. He'd almost forgotten about Hannibal and Will. Oops? Will scowled at them, rubbing his face like he could scrub the emotions out of himself eyeballs first.

"Nigel I'm taking a shower, don't forget about the job"

Nigel lit another cigarette, smiling at Adam like he was the sun. He didn't bother to look at Will.

"I'm good mate"

Will stumbled his way to the bathroom grumbling under his breath.

Nigel, watched him go with no small amount of affection. He tapped Adam again to get his attention, smirking like he knew exactly how very good at getting Adam's attention he was.

"You hungry babe?"

"... I haven't gotten high since I started my graduate program, of course I am. I could eat uhh.... a very large and completely normal meal...as long as you don't go around claiming you're the coolest thing in the known universe, science knows you're wrong Nigel."

"I like it when you say my name babe, I'll have to come up with new creative ways to make you say it over and over."

Nigel winked as he surprisingly gracefully slithered out of the bed. He saved Adam the embarrassment of being flustered out loud by shifting gears immediately. Warm and sincere again instead of being so flirty.

"Ok don't forget your questions then gorgeous I'll still answer them... let's go eat while I do"

Nigel pulled him out of the bed at full speed, the over shot kind of slammed them into each other. It didn't hurt but it was jarringly much to nice. Nigel was so strong and warm Adam forgot to be all flappy anxious about touching someone, a minor miracle in and of itself.

Nigel smelled so damn good, weed, smoke, whiskey, with a touch of salt and pepper musk. That might be his new favorite combination of scents. He wanted to taste the skin that radiated that heaven so badly his mouth acted of its own accord, nipping at Nigel's shoulder before he remembered himself and stopped. Nigel mercifully just grinned at him, raising an eyebrow in amused question.

This must be what a space walk felt like, floating in the night sky. Adam thought he might drift away. Surely he was only held to the earth right now by the magnetic pull of Nigel's whiskey and cigarettes sincerity. His insides purred. The heat of a thousand suns hot and sharp in the pit of his stomach. It was powerfully overwhelming, intoxicating.

An emission nebulae is a cloud of ionized gas emitting a diffuse glow that's often associated with stars that have a temperature over 20,000 degrees kelvin. Interstellar radiance

"Ok Nigel, where are we gonna go eat?"

Effervescent pleased, Nigel spun Adam, gentle but insistent, as he stepped around, so that they were still facing each other. It felt like he was making sure to not leave Adam behind, keeping him close without being overbearing about it. Oh, Hannibal was right there, right, just over there on the other bed, tied up like one of Mason's yearling pigs. Haaa that probably shouldn't be funny to him. He'd blame the weed.

Considering, Nigel peered at Hannibal speculatively for a minute before finally shrugging to himself and efficiently flipping Hannibal around so he was half propped up on pillows, blindfold pulled down, with a tv remote he might be able to use somewhat. Then he sat down beside him on the bed, looking for all the world like he was chewing something particularly gristly.

"I don't really know what game you're playing Doctor Lecter, I'm not sure I like it. But unlike my partner. I understand that sometimes you just have to let the fruit ripen on the fuckin vine. So, I don't know why yet, but I can see you want to be here, and that you mean Will no harm."

"Well, I-,"

Nigel brushed him off casually.

"Fuck no mate, we both know nothin you say right now will be true. Nah, leave it. I know what I see, if you can honestly tell me you won't run off, that you'll stay here with him. I'll cut your restraints too"

"I think Will would find that most upsetting. I'll be fine as is."

Nigel shrugged, like he'd expected that answer.

"Sure. Tell the wanker I'm on fuckin mission so he can unfucking clench. We'll bring back food, fries or something. You want something specific?"

"That's incredibly considerate of you. I would love a cheese burger, black and blue if possible. Is my friend safe with you Nigel?"

"There's no contract as long as we're not paid... Anyone who wants to hurt him would have to come through me."

"Even if it's your business partner?"

Nigel laughed at him cynical and a little dismissive.

"You seem to have my man Will well in hand. Don't worry about tomorrow's problems today Doctor Lecter, it strains the fiber of our souls...and men like you and me, our souls can't take much wear and tear can they?"

Hannibal didn't argue the point, the two of them held each other's eyes with a casually violent frankness. Old warriors ready for war... but not hungry for it today. The silence in the room heavy with the electromagnetic pulse of blood lust and loyalty. Nigel broke the spell first, laughing easily, as if they hadn't been centimeters from murdering each other with their bare hands.

"You're worrying to much mate, Adam's safe with me today. I've dropped people for less, and so have you. I can see that much. Tomorrow will go however tomorrow goes. Today if I say no one will hurt him, that's what the fuck will happen. If you try to manipulate me again, try to turn me against Will, I'll find everything you hold sacred and burn it to the goddamn ground."

Sighing, like he'd just hit a concrete wall of exhaustion, Nigel continued.

"I can see what he sees in you... What you see in each other. Will never knows how to let things play out on their own either. Always has to fuckin meddle, get blood on his hands

personally. Couple of uptight gothic cunts. You two, you're a good match. I hope you're as good as you think you are Doctor Lecter. All hell is about to break loose if you're not."

Nigel levered himself off the bed, turning to leave, pulling Adam behind him, thought better of it and turned back to Hannibal.

"I do fuckin like you and Adam both though so let me save your life for you. Don't underestimate him and don't lie to him. Not even once, me I'm pretty live and let live. You don't fuck with me, I won't fuck with you. But if you give Will Graham a single real reason to doubt you, he'll tear a vengeance out of you so brutal, so stunningly savage, that your ancestors will wail and tear their hair. One split second. You'll be dead before you have a chance to explain yourself. Whatever you want, make sure you mean it, make sure you really want it. You won't get a second chance."

With that Nigel, simmering with barely contained annoyance, turned to leave again, pulling Adam behind him in his wake.

*"*Nigel, Wait*"*

Nigel froze, it'd been a long time since he'd heard anyone speak Romanian. Hannibal's eastern European accent wasn't quite right, but it was the closest to home he'd felt in years. The ghost of past lives slipping through the cracks. He turned slowly back to Hannibal.

*"*What?*"*

*"*Do you love him?*"*

*"*Adam? I don't really know him. I like him a lot. He's good.*"*

*"*Yes he is, however I meant Will*"*

*"*Not romantically, but yeah he's family*"*

*"*So you're capable of love then?*"*

*"*Abso-fuckin-lutely. Are you?*"*

*"*I don't know. I think perhaps I would like to be. What does it feel like? Falling in love?*"*

Nigel closed his eyes, counting backwards from ten to center himself. Whatever point Hannibal was trying to make, speaking Romanian was making the phantasm of his past a little to solid in his mind.

He'd had enough of that.

"Shit. Seriously? Ok, I'm done with the Romanian psychological warfare. What does falling in love feel like? Fucking fuck, you two are fucking soulmates. I swear to damn god. What does love feel like? Of all the Will Graham questions... Love feels better then then the most glorious thing you've ever felt. It's more thrilling then the most exciting thing you've ever done and more comforting then the sweetest moment you can imagine. Falling in love tastes

better then your favorite meal, feels happier then the most joyful thing you remember, scarier then the most terrifying thing you've ever experienced. It hurts in your gut wobbly and loose, hot and tight. Falling in love feels like falling up, like falling asleep, and falling off a cliff all at once. It's indescribable, addictive, everything and nothing in one breath. If you do it right, it's infinite, nearly indestructible, feeds all parties involved. If you do it wrong it'll hollow you out, suck you dry, shoot you in the face and leave you for dead on the fuckin docks."

Hannibal squinted at him slightly, thinking.

"Spoken from experience?"

"Damn right. We done?"

Hannibal just nodded, wiggling around to turn the TV on.

Huffing in annoyance Nigel shook his head and hauled Adam out of the motel room. When they were settled in the SUV, Adam, flutter stimming anxiously, took a deep breath and said the thing he didn't want to have to say.

"Nigel, you shouldn't talk to Hannibal like that. No one talks to Hannibal like that, not even Mason. No one talks to Hannibal like that, he's more dangerous then he looks."

"Really? Because outside of the plaid suits and fussy affectations, he looks pretty fuckin dangerous"

Adam thought about what he could safely say very carefully.

"However dangerous you think he is, he's a thousand times more dangerous then that. He's not callous. He's kept me safe for years because he does, he can care, but if he doesn't? Nigel, you're right about him allowing this. He uhh, I don't think I can say more then that but you already guessed that."

Nigel slid a hand over Adam's knee to smooth calming touches into the worn denim of his jeans.

"Hey, it's ok beautiful, don't break his trust. I'm not asking you to choose. Your secrets are yours. I don't want you tell me anything that'll force me to take any drastic action anyway. I just fuckin don't. I don't wanna know. Will needs time to process. I intend to give it to him, and you-, "

"Ok, but Nigel why do *you* care? Why do you-?"

Nigel's eyes went soft at that.

"I just do beautiful. I just do. I call you gorgeous, beautiful, pretty and all because you are. I call people nicknames as a default because I'm real fuckin bad at remembering names. If people are used to me never saying the name their mama gave them, they won't get offended when I don't remember theirs. Adam listen, I can feel what you want to ask me, and I don't know yet. It's complicated but I'm looking for an answer. I'm actively looking for an answer. If you ask me now, you won't like what you hear."

Adam could see how serious Nigel was, he really was looking for a resolution to the problem as he understood it. He was kind of lovely. It was hard not to be smitten

"Yeah, ok, I think I understand."

The affectionate relief was stark on Nigel's face

"Thank you. So what do you want to eat?"

"Well I know this sounds like a ridiculous combination but I really want fresh fruit and pizza."

Nigel Laughed in surprised pleasure, his hand was still warm and reassuring right above Adam's knee.

"As You Wish, Prince Buttercup"

"You know The Princess Bride?"

"Dread Pirate Roberts in all that black silk? Of course I know The Princess Bride, anyway everyone knows The Princess Bride"

Adam still had his hand on Adam's thigh, like Nigel was afraid he'd float away in a draft if they weren't always touching. Adam loved it, didn't want there to be any reason for him to stop while they were in the car. He shifted slightly so he could pull Nigel's cigarettes out of his shirt pocket. He lit one, with only minimum coughing, and held it up for Nigel to take a drag.

Nigel looked a little stunned, focused on Adam like he was the most beautiful thing in the known universe.

"You're something else entirely Adam, precious. What do your stars have to say about that? What do they have to say about all this?"

Adam, swallowed, his throat very dry now. Precious? No one had ever called him precious ever, not once, not even his parents. Precious?

Supernova Remnants are Nebulae born from the explosion of a star in a supernova. The outer edge of the nebula is defined by an expanding shock wave carrying cosmic debris both from the exploding star and objects in space that got swept up in the wave. Cosmic rebirth

"Nigel, I don't think stars have opinions on human affairs"

"They don't? You sure?"

"As sure as I can be while not actually being a star"

"Oh well see, now I know you're lying because you're definitely a star, star boy"

"***Nigel***..."

Nigel tucked his fingers ever so slightly under the roundness of Adam's thigh. Heaven.

"Yeah babe?"

"Nevermind, thanks for buying me something to eat"

"Least I can do considering I kidnapped you and all"

"You did kidnap me"

"I did"

"I think you're gonna have to think of a way to make it up to me, something more then 2 am pizza and mango"

"Oh I definitely will"

A million suns blazed to life in Adam's heart, coursing through his veins, setting his soul ablaze.

Just a little bit perfect. Gorgeous

Being kidnapped might be Adam's new favorite thing after the stars

Cosmic

Chapter End Notes

Chapter Title Song:

SuperKnova, The World Is Ending, I'm So Bored

Still You Get Wrapped Up in Misery(And I Love It)

Chapter Notes

We are earning our rating in this chapter I guess. There's been some tags added

There will be blood, nightmares, & Body horror in the first half of the chapter

It's still an action rom com I swear.

Next Chapter Spacedogs perspective & then they're gonna be meeting Mason... & That's gonna get... Interesting

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will knew he must be dreaming.

He was in a finely appointed ballroom bathed in a rich velvety scarlet with extravagant gold accents. A long table loomed in the distance. The hall might go on indefinitely, he could never quite tell. The room echoed with the distant sounds of a large crowd laughing and dancing. In the way of dreams, he couldn't see the party even as it grew louder.

There were only hints, scratches and scuffs, remnants of where they'd been before. Though he walked in the direction of the banquet endlessly, he never quite caught up with them. They were always around the corner, just out of sight, hidden in his blind spot, right behind him.

As he got closer to the elaborate banquet table he realized it'd been set for a king's feast. The main course given pride of place at the center of the table was a gigantic shimmering black feathered stag. It had an air of death and despair settled over it's noble shoulders. The closer Will got to the stag, the louder and more overwhelming the party noise got. He still couldn't see the people, it's invisible volume unnerved him. He wanted to cover his ears, yell at someone to shut the hell up.

There was no one to yell at.

Having finally crossed the ballroom and reached the ebony feathered stag ~~***the Ravenstag***~~*, the sounds of human frivolity were almost painfully loud, it was a steady spiking blare in his ears. Up close, the Ravenstag was clearly still alive. Will gasped in horror at the way it'd been splayed out, a crude display across the table. Thick juicy slabs of steak and rich moist wedges of red velvet cake had been carved from the stag's flanks, plated on elegant golden plates... everywhere. There were more plates then the table could reasonably hold. It was chaotic and claustrophobic. Plates were precariously perched over every inch of the table. In some places the plates were stacked three or four deep with no attention to which plates were*

being stacked where, bloody steak dripped ominously onto vibrant crimson cake. Large hunks of sanguine vermillion cake tumbled onto steaming plates of roast elk.

The table was a heart wrenching grisly battle field. The phantom footprint of a war long since won and lost. The stag was forfeiting, it lay quietly blinking at him, serene, content with it's fate... even as it bled profusely, blood puddled between the gold leaf plates, drizzled lazily over the edge of the table, a morbid waterfall.

Will realized in shocked dismay that all the deep red accents in the room were actually the blood of the Ravenstag pouring viscous and clotted down the walls, spreading across the marble floors, a grim lake of gore closing in on him inexorably.

The party sounds turned sharp around the edges, the laughter strident, threatening. Then it wasn't people anymore, it was the furious squealing of enraged pigs... So many pigs, everywhere fighting ruthlessly over their slop.

Will did cover his ears in desperation then, closed his eyes too, counting backwards from ten, trying to ground himself. The intensity of the screaming pigs pierced him spiritually, from his feet to his crown, noise careening jagged and sharp through his entire nervous system, demanding his attention.

Nothing could block out the fevered screaming of so many greedy pigs clambering to get at all the steak and cake first. They fought, slashing and tearing at each other as they climbed over one another, wallowing on the blood drenched floors in insatiable tempestuous delight.

Will opened his eyes again to find himself staring into the depths of the Ravenstag's whiskey dark eyes. He felt a sob held hot and painful in his throat as he reached tentatively to soothe the beautiful creature.

"Please, why are you letting them eat you? You're so beautiful, so powerful... you don't have to do this. Why?"

The stag only huffed warm whuffs of forest air across Will's face. He inched forward fingers tracing the velvet softness of its face, the strength in its jaws, the antlers bloody with freshly shed velvet. Will struggled to stay calm as he pressed the ghost of a gentle apologetic kiss across it's broad reassuring nose.

The world sparked electric when his lips met the stag's fur, spun on its axis as the pigs screamed and screamed.

And then in the way of dreams he was in the blessedly quiet forest with the miraculously healed Ravenstag. This was his forest, his world, his life. The stag held gentle laughter in the air between them, pleased.

~~*Healed with a kiss~~**

The Stag didn't speak in the way of cartoon animals but he did speak, His voice hung on the wind, warm in every corner of Will's mind, melodic with it's curling summery accent. It was

Hannibal Lecter's voice that buzzed pleasantly in his sternum when The Ravenstag spoke directly into his mind to answer his question.

"Even monsters grow tired, even monsters like us might sometimes feel the full weight of mortality dragging us down into the deeps of loneliness and despair. I no longer have a reason to fight the inclination... So I allow them to consume me, ritually at least. I've grown impossibly fatigued bearing the burden of all these songs of devotional destruction alone"

Will realized he was crying then, bloody tears rolled salty down his cheeks, landing with a lewd crimson splat on the forest floor. He wanted to hide the stag behind his ribs, nestle it safely in the well of his hip bone, hold it close and covetous.

"I do understand exhaustion, they don't deserve your life and death though. You can't give it to them so easily. You can't. Please"

"William, I'm not giving my life to them, I'm giving my life to you. What you choose to do with it is up to you. The gift was already given freely. I won't unmake it, for even now you hold it in your hands gauging the weight and worth of it. Having given you the gift I can only wait for your decision"

Will saw himself then as the stag saw him, violence incarnate, a secret sacred beautiful force of nature.

He was holding the Ravenstag's antlers, ripped rough from his skull. The antlers were heavy in his hands. An acidic venom wept from them, scalding his palms. The stag was winded, visibly sagging in exhaustion, ready for the end of his lifelong struggle. Will tried to drop the antlers, to give them back... he couldn't, they'd become adhered to his palms, part of him. Still the acid ate away at the angry mauve flesh of his hands.

"No I don't want this..."

"Oh sweet vicious William. You don't have to bend to their whims, but you do have to choose. You're the only one who can. We could hunt together, forever. We could remake those unappreciative of the gift they've been given, show them such a delectable suffering, art and sacrifice in one. We could steal the cruel and indifferent, elevate them to something glorious, divine. We could create sacred art with our hands held together, reverence carved in flesh and bone. The pitch of your ferocity is so lovely Will. Though we're both singular, neither of us have to be alone, not anymore. You could hunt with me instead of hunting me. "

"But, I can't. I have to-"

The elk stepped back into the mist, turning away from Will woefully, he paused at the waters edge, thoughtful.

"You're more powerful then you let yourself feel William. There is no man on earth that could make you hunt that which you did not wish to hunt"

Then the Ravenstag turned and leapt into the water, transforming into man, monster, or fish in mid air. The fish slid into the river without a sound. The otherworldly quiet of the forest

pressed down along the line of his spine, crushing him. He waited for the elk fish Hannibal to come to the surface.

He never did.

The antlers still wept acid and blood, mourning their master's loss. Thunder cracked, Will looked up at the ominous grey clouds gathering, rain was coming. When he looked back down at his burning hands, the antlers became his favorite knives. Will knew then what he had to do. He grimaced, resolute as he jammed first one blade then the other into his own skull. The blades were white hot, there was a wet sliding crunch as they notched happily into place.

~~*Home*~~

Will could feel the hunting knives blooming, growing into antlers again, taking root, burrowing into the soft forgiving meat of his brain, boring into his marrow. His body shook with the brutality of this onslaught, eclipsed with all encompassing excruciating pain. Blood and sweat rolled thick and sweet down his forehead, dripping into his eyes, over the bridge of his nose, his cheekbones, the line of his jaw.

He needed the blood, his and Hannibal's intermingled, so he rubbed it into his skin until it tingled, a sacred blessing. the weight of the antlers felt right pressed against the dome of his skull. Being reborn was always a painful process, as it should be.

Will swooned, his head full of angry staticy bees, the agonizing volume drove him to his hands and knees, sobbing tears of blood. His body stretched, bending and breaking, the weight of his antlers pulled his head back towards the earth, falling with the help of overanxious gravity. His spine bent and twisted unnaturally as his heart ripped itself out of his chest, the irregular thud whump of it's beating tore at the remnants of his sanity.

Storm winds whipped dry leaves and earth from the loamy forest floor into his face, into all of his exposed gory wounds. Biting fleshy raindrops fell from the forbidding grey storm clouds, slow at first and then faster, their acidic burn scalded his naked heart everywhere they landed.

The veins and arteries keeping him alive and connected to his heart strained under the torsion of his bucking savage heart as it tried to rip itself away from him. His entire circulatory system pulled threadbare and wispy as his heart slowly won it's deadly contest of strength and endurance. Veins ruptured, tearing free of his chest, hemorrhaging oceans of blood, pain exploded through every cell of his body, his entire awareness sizzled, every universe in his heart and mind burned and died, then burned and died again. A dazzling excruciating rhythm of life and death.

Then there was nothing.

Void.

~~*Please*~~

~~*You know what you have to do William*~~

Will opened his eyes, now he was the Ravenstag, he stomped his powerfully long legs and the earth shook in answer. On the horizon, in the far flung mountains, he heard the lonely eerie call of another bull elk. Then millions of Ravens wheeling and shrieking his name.

~~*William*~~

No

~~*Please don't leave me behind, I'm trying. I'm so tired. I don't know what to do*~~

In so saying Will realized that in this form, the glorious monstrous elk knew what he couldn't have known as a man.

~~*Revelation*~~

The Ravenstag had energy to persevere where the man had none. In the place the man was weighed down with confusion and hesitation The Ravenstag held only the absolute certainty of its belonging.

And then he knew

And then he'd always known

Will, and the Ravenstag, sharing one heart and one mind, looked to the far flung mountains and began to run. His cloven obsidian hooves beat a staccato rhythm as he ran, a bone deep resonant heart beat

THUD THUD- THUD THUD- THUD THUD- THUD THUD

Around him rain poured down, thick with viscera, lightning flashed, thunder cracked, and the earth shook.

Beside him, the river ran red with blood

--

Will woke up holding back a grievous despair, a deep mournful wail that bounced painfully inside his skull. Hannibal was centimeters from his face, watching him, concerned but cautious, speculative. Waking up in such close proximity to another human being, staring directly into that human's eyes still half in the nightmare, caused an ice cold jolt of stark defensive terror to spike through his body. Life long well honed self preservation instincts took over. Wild and only half awake, growling reflexively, Will rolled over, pinning Hannibal to the bed under his knees. He captured Hannibal's throat in bruising fingers, choking him with murderous intent.

Hannibal didn't move, his deep umber eyes wide and unblinking, unafraid, watching.

again... My Ravenstag

The nightmare echoed cold and discomfiting, when Will realized what he was doing, that Hannibal wasn't trying to fight him off or protect himself at all. His heart spasmed unevenly in his chest making him tremble and loosen his grip.

Still caught in the remnants of the nightmare, Will's body moved of its own accord. Instead of backing up or rolling away again he wrenched Hannibal's head back by his sleek silver blonde hair, bit the savory sweet hollow of his throat harder then he should, no longer able to contain the need to bury himself in the place where he could smell Hannibal's decedent peppery musk permeating everything.

Will couldn't help the primal drive to press himself into Hannibal in any way, in every way, teeth and nails sharp and needful, grinding and scratching, desperate to catch, to taste, to consume... desperate to possess that which was not his to possess. Hannibal tasted like blood and the hunt. He tasted like a violence so luscious and pure it coiled like a rattlesnake around their souls, stitched itself into something new and unknown, something that felt frighteningly close to love.

Love?

No that wasn't right. There would be no such thing as love for monsters like him... for monsters like Hannibal Lecter. There couldn't be. Entertaining the idea was foolish, yet his heart having picked up the idea of finding love, had no wish to set it back down again. In his cold *not quite* dead heart, behind his eyes, Ravens whispered his name.

~~**William William William**~~

Will shook his head, willing himself into this moment, this place, fully and completely. The last whisps of the dream stag's words cleared away like fog on the morning breeze. Realizing what exactly he was doing, Will let go entirely, scrabbling backwards off the bed.

Every bit as infuriating as ever, Hannibal was apparently completely unbothered, only quirking an understated wicked smile before he rolled awkwardly in his bindings, propping himself up in a halfway sitting position.

"Why Mr Graham, if you keep flirting with me, I might get the idea that instead of killing me, you'd rather do other things with me..."

Will's body screamed in the affirmative at him.

~~*****YES YES*****~~

No

"Shut up, I'm a fucking professional... What did you do to me? What are you doing to me Hannibal?"

Hannibal let his eyes linger along the lines of Will's body, the strength in his shoulders, his hands well calloused and experienced in dealing death, the derisive curl of his merciless pink

mouth that was always the color of blood wine and rain, the naked threat of his canines anytime he growled or scowled. Will was a sculpture worth appreciating.

"I'm in restraints William. I hardly think I'm in any position to do anything to you that you don't want done"

Will growl croaked, his voice rusty and tight like he hadn't spoken in ages.

"You know what I mean"

Hannibal still looked all to pleased as he considered the question, humming thoughtfully.

"Some horses, mostly show horses & race horses that aren't allowed to roam free with their familial herds as their nature intends... they can be notoriously finicky to safely and successfully breed the old fashioned way. They become accustomed to their solitary lives in their solitary boxes, fed fine grains. They become potentially dangerous to each other because they're so used to their seclusion, to a life of ease but very little comfort, the only joy to be found when they're running or working for someone else, relishing the pure honest joy of feeling their bodies strong and alive.

This lack of familiarity is so volatile that two modern horses generally need to already like each other before they can be introduced for breeding purposes. A mare who doesn't like her stallion will happily break his legs, castrate him with one powerful kick. However if a stallion and a mare enjoy each other's company, the mare will call to her stallion and he will do anything to answer her call. He'll throw himself against the walls that separate them to the point of exhaustion or injury. He might even accidentally seriously injure himself or her in the unstoppable desperation of his attempts. While hearing her beckon to him both needy and demanding, he can only exist to hammer down those boundary walls with his own body so that he might be closer to her. He can't and won't stop until they're allowed access to each other, physically separated, or he dies of stress and exhaustion."

Will sneered from the place he was still half crouched, just past the end of the lumpy green and brown motel bed.

"You've been living with Mason Verger for way to fucking long Hannibal. I'm not a fucking mare"

Hannibal laughed, charmed.

"No, of course not William. You're the stallion..."

Hannibal looked sideways at Will, almost playfully mischievous.

"I have however, definitely lived with Mason, how did you put it? Way to fucking long?... way to fucking long."

Will huffed, amused despite himself. Hannibal had a way of defying his expectations in the most interesting ways, it was addictive.

Swallowing his good humor, Will crossed the room, carefully avoiding getting close to Hannibal again, snatched up the burner phone, and headed to the bathroom without turning the light on. He was studiously pretending his body and mind weren't in a furious burning conflict as he tapped in the number he'd now had memorized for several days. In the relative safety of the semi dark bathroom Will didn't have to look at Hannibal's smug delicious face while he was trying to focus. When the call was eventually picked up by yet another gatekeeping personal assistant, for the fifty millionth time in a row, Will was furious.

"I need to speak to Mason fucking Verger. This is Will Graham. You know who I am, I know you do. I don't care how much he wants you to give me the run around. With all due respect ma'am, I don't have a damn bone to pick with you, you don't deserve my ire, but if you don't put him on the line, you'll be the one getting it. You and I both know he isn't worth that. Now you tell your boss if he doesn't get on the phone right now he can consider his contract null and fucking void, and I know he doesn't want that... so please. Do. That. Now."

The personal assistant yelped, mumbling something placating at him but did put him on hold to get Mason... *finally*. Five ridiculous minutes later, Mason popped on the line feigning ignorance of the whole situation.

Will's resentment at these middle school ego games of Mason's bubbled to an all time high. Mason's fake cheerful over compensation was as nauseating as ever.

"Will my friend, I was wondering when you'd finally call. I was beginning to be concerned Hannibal might've eaten your liver before you could do the dirty deed. I've had my men keeping an eye on Freddie Lounds and Tattlecrime just in case"

Will hissed under his breath, sucking cold grounding breaths through clenched teeth.

"Why would you think Hannibal would've killed your hired assassins Mason?"

Mason cackled, his manner always grating and superior.

"Oh no reason at all Will, no reason at all. Why he's just an artist and a musician, a gentleman through and through. I'm sure you're in no danger-"

We could create sacred art, reverence carved in flesh and bone. Though we're both singular, neither of us must be alone, not anymore

Will smiled at no one in the darkness of the bathroom, a predator's smile. In Mason's overwhelming need to showboat he'd betrayed himself, given them an all to important piece of the puzzle. Will really only needed that one little piece to reframe his understanding of everything. Mason Verger was afraid of his husband... and his husband considers himself and artist.

I've had my men keeping an eye on Freddie Lounds and Tattlecrime just in case

As all the pieces and players in this situation rearranged themselves into a brand new configuration, Will felt a wash of glorious burning clarity. Mason Verger was afraid of his posh, educated, artistic husband. No he was more then afraid, he was completely terrified of

him. That was why he resented both Adam and Hannibal. That was why he didn't kill them himself, That was why he couldn't risk sending his own henchmen after them, that was why he wanted to hire the best, and why he didn't expect them to live.

The question was, what sort of man haunted Mason Verger's nightmares?

I was beginning to think Hannibal might've eaten your liver

A pork baron and a cannibal, it was almost funny.

One shining name burst into Will's awareness. He knew what kind of man made Mason Verger quake with fear, afraid to be in the same state after such a grandiose betrayal. A man who saw Mason Verger, pork belly billionaire as no different than his own pigs...

****The Chesapeake Ripper****

That was it... that was the missing piece.

Will growled, fiercely aggravated, beyond done with this noxious Verger fuck's bullshit. He was a man of his word, but he was not a magnanimous man when it came to being dicked around.

"I'm done playing with you Mason, so now you have four hours to meet us at the LynnHaven Mall. You have a jet, you can make that easily. We told you not to fuck around with us. You just had to press. It's been to damn long since you had anyone but Hannibal to push back on your fragile little billionaire bubble. If you don't show up, our contract will be void. If you don't meet the terms of your contract Mason, I'll ruin your life. I'll pick it apart at the seams and set it on fire, I'ill maim, murder and salt the fucking earth every single place you try to lay your weary head. I'll slaughter all your pigs and sell them to Oscar fucking Meyer for fifty five fucking cents. I'll haunt you in a way you have never imagined. I will hunt you to the ends of the earth and back again... and when you're so exhausted that you can no longer hold even your inflated fucking ego up, when you beg me to kill you? I'll hand your husband a fucking cast iron pan and a chef knife and watch him fry you up myself.... the last thing you'll ever hear is *my laughter*....then just to annihilate you as fully as possible, we'll fry up your bitter unpleasant brain and feed it to my fucking dogs. Because that slop is undeserving of human consumption."

He didn't give Mason time to lie anymore, instead jabbing the end call button and tossing the burner on the pitted grey formica bathroom counter. He paced vaguely back into the main space of the motel room, leaning against the rickety dresser with his eyes closed, trying to manufacture a patience he'd never had in his life.

Hannibal rustled slightly from the bed, still bound.

"That was quite a delicious display of fury William but I'm afraid, he will betray you. It's the kind of man he is, he can't help himself. Meaningless thoughtless destruction is his only joy. He'll betray you and hope we kill each other before we can become a problem for him"

Will prowled closer, a crooked vicious smile drenched in blood lust gave him the bearing of a starving animal scenting his favorite prey, eager for the hunt. He looked sideways at Hannibal, a dry humorless laugh whispered an angry punctuation

"Let him fucking try. He's afraid of us separately? Wait till he's got to deal with all of us chewing through his army of two bit bullies and half assed henchmen. I meant what I said. If he pays me, I'll put a bullet in your brain right then and there. If he doesn't show, I'll turn his face into bacon, fry it up for you myself-, *Ripper*"

For one split second telescoping into infinity, the name hung between them, possibilities spiraling out from one single name on Will's lips.

Ripper

Looking almost pleased, relieved or amused, a flash of levity, a microscopic quirk of the lips, Hannibal shifted his weight, arms twisting-

Time crashed back into place.

Torque, knowledge, strength, and tenacity snapped the zip ties in an instant. Hannibal shot up, barreling out of the bed. He landed on his feet at a run, grabbed Will by the collar of his T Shirt and his jaw, rammed them through the bathroom door, and slammed him headfirst into the heavy mirror hanging over the sink. The clattering of the door banging against the wall was punctuated by glass cracking and grinding under the impact of Will's skull.

After years of working together Nigel was easily able to sleep through Will's moods, real violence was different though. The crash of breaking glass and slamming doors woke him with a start. Immediately assessing and responding on instinct, he was fully awake with his gun in hand in a split second.

Nigel leapt over the bed and loped across the room mere fractions of a second after the mess of limbs and feral snarling that were Will and Hannibal. Hot on their heels, his gun was jammed in the back of Hannibal's head before the door stopped banging it's discordant exclamation of trouble.

On the other side of the gun was a finally tousled and unsure Hannibal, under his unrelenting hands Will was bent backwards over the small grey motel countertop, his head pressed against the wall mounted mirror. Hannibal had been allowed past Will's guard and was nestled growling and dangerous between Will's thighs.

Adam, in a pair of threadbare grey sweats that said "Pățăști" in faded blue lettering, the only person in the room without a life time of hair trigger instincts, shuffled into the bathroom a few seconds of tense silence later, flipping on the bathroom light out of habit.

Until he took in the whole arrangement he'd been mostly grumble whining at being woken up by such a commotion and sudden lack of Nigel shaped pillow, Adam rubbed his eyes, groggy. Then he saw... well everything. Though Nigel couldn't know, Adam had seen Hannibal serious about killing someone before plenty. This, wasn't that, this was... still flirting.

Adam didn't know exactly what drove Hannibal to torture himself by making it as difficult as possible to ever make real human connections... punishing himself probably, for things that happened when he was to young to stop them.

Whatever the source was, this was more of that instinct to push anything and everything away... It was like Hannibal had to try and kill anything nice before it got to close to him... before his corruption could spread.

"Nigel, it's... I know it doesn't look ok, but I promise, it's ok"

Nigel didn't look away from the back of Hannibal's head.

"I very fucking much do not think it's ok babe"

Adam tugged gently on Nigel's elbow, not wanting to make anything worse.

"No it is, I know it looks bad. But if Hannibal wanted Will dead, he'd be dead Nigel. We'd be eating paté on our way to Paris right now. That's not his serious murder face, it's his punishing himself face... or maybe his pushing people away face."

Adam rocked up on the balls of his feet, his whole body tense and focused in his need to communicate clearly and accurately.

"Remember what you told me the last night about the... You know with Wi-, Uh.... I mean... Hannibal has a stupid annoying poker face, but he's afraid to let people close too, some fucking cursed existence thing, a personal war with god or whatever.... I don't know, I'm not saying this right, I believe in the stars, not gods. I can't explain it like he can but Nigel. I swear they're so much alike, and.... I don't know does Will seem that fucked up about it really? I mean look at them, I'm pretty sure I've seen this porno before-. Fuck, I didn't mean to say it like that. It sounds worse then it is.... Nigel You asked me to trust you yesterday right? Today I'm asking you to trust me too. We knew this would have to happen. What Hannibal wants... It's not just free of Mason. Will has to know what he's choosing. It's ok. I *swear* it's ok."

Nigel scowled at them both, considering what Adam said. He raised one eyebrow at Will in question, shoving the gun just a little bit further into the back of Hannibal's head as he spoke.

"Well ***William*** what do you say? Should I let him have his way with you? Hmmm?! I need to know what the fuck you cunts are thinking. This is getting on my every fuckin nerve"

Will rolled his eyes at Hannibal but nodded loosely.

"It's ok Nigel, we're ok"

Nigel noticed then that Hannibal had actually put his hand between Will's head and the glass before they hit the wall... presumably to protect it from stray bits of broken glass. Tiny rivulets of blood slid slowly from Hannibal's palm, along the spider web of cracks, and down the dull motel glass. Unbelievable.

Fuckin drama queens

Nigel tucked his gun away, shrugging and turning his back on them. He tugged Adam unceremoniously back to bed with him where he sprawled out, cussing extensively in Romanian.

Back in the bathroom, Hannibal had the decency to look at least slightly aware of and embarrassed by the scene he'd just caused. He chuckled, quietly.

"Your partner doesn't like me much"

Will rolled his eyes again without trying to wiggle free.

"I can't imagine why"

Hannibal shrugged in acknowledgement without loosening his hold on Will at all.

"Do we have a problem William? I'd intended to tell you myself... sometime when we were in public preferably, in case you didn't take the news well. Did Mason tell you?"

Will didn't answer at first, looking up at Hannibal through his eyelashes in amused tantalizing judgement. He let his body go loose and heavy, sliding slowly inevitably down, hips low. He shifted them just enough to switch positions, so that Will was the one nestled, warm and defiant between Hannibal's thighs. He smirked wickedly at Hannibal's questioning flirty raised eyebrow.

Will flashed a single graceful canine, both promise and threat made savage beautiful in the overly bright amber light. Cracking his neck, Will looked up through his eyelashes in mocking demure seriousness, his fingers traced the outline of Hannibal's blue silk tie.

"No we don't have a problem"

Moving lighting fast, Will pulled Hannibal towards him by his ridiculous rumpled tie and hooked a leg behind his ankle so he could throw the whole of his body weight against the hip pinning him to the sink.

The combined push pull gave Will just enough leverage and momentum to drop Hannibal unceremoniously in the bath tub. It wasn't exactly gentle injury prevention but Will kept ahold of Hannibal's stupid tie so he wouldn't hit his head either.

Still holding the tie tight, Will looked down at Hannibal, smirking heavily at the reversal, pleased for the first time in a week.

"- Mason didn't have to tell me anything Hannibal. I'm not one of his glorified body guards. He kept making cannibalism jokes. He's a pig farmer in a designer suit, it shoulda been the opposite. Mason Verger's about as subtle as a concrete mixer full of napalm. He's not creative enough to think that shit up on his own... and I had a dream"

Hannibal was placid again, smiling that warm secret smile up at him.

"You had a dream about me?"

Will closed his eyes in frustration. He shouldn't have let that slip. He dropped the tie, and backed slowly out of the room, scoffing with more assurance then he felt.

"See that is why I don't wear ties Hannibal... Someone dangerous might get a hold of you.... anyway don't get your panties in a wad about the dream. You were a fucking red velvet cake"

"Red velvet cake is a delightful, elegant, attention grabbing cake. Your subconscious is quite generous in it'd estimation of me"

Hannibal held his hands up, wrists touching, with an expression that could only be described as bratty. He batted his eyelashes at Will, enjoying himself now.

"Wait don't leave, I'm a dangerous man William. Aren't you gonna cuff me again officer Graham??"

Will snarled

"Officer Graham? Did you do a background check on me?!?!"

Hannibal was back to wearing the tiny annoying smirk

"Whatever do you mean Will? I'm not sure what you're implying. Should I wait here for you to zip tie me again?"

"We're a little past that now aren't we Hannibal? Enjoy your freedom while you have it. We're gonna be heading out soon anyway."

Will could hear the chuckle of amusement in Hannibal's voice.

"If you think that's what's best William dear"

Will only growled, refusing to give Hannibal the satisfaction of looking again. He already knew Hannibal was wearing that small pleased smile.

Will could feel it in his bones.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter Title:
Emotional Oranges, All That (ft. Channel Tres)

End Notes

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